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FARM LABOR IN MASSACHUSETTS, 1921.

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CONTENTS.

	Page.
Object and methods of study	1
Number, classes, and seasons of employment of farm employees	2
Methods of obtaining farm employees	5
Nationality, residence, ages, and dependents of farm employees	7
Education and occupational history of farm employees	9
Hours and days per week required of farm employees	14
Wages, requisites, and living accommodations for farm employees	15
Nonagricultural employment available	20
Recreation and social standing of farm employees	21
Savings and future plans of farm employees	22
Improvement of the farm labor situation	23
Summary and conclusions	23

OBJECT AND METHODS OF STUDY.

The object of this study was to investigate farm labor conditions in Massachusetts, with special reference to ways and means used in obtaining and holding labor, the kind of laborers on farms, and their occupational history and ambitions.

The study was carried out in the summer of 1921 by mail and personal canvass. Two questionnaires were used, one for employers of farm labor, the other for the laborers. Address lists of farmers, most of them known to have hired farm labor, were secured, largely through the Massachusetts Agricultural College. These included operators of all types of farms in all parts of the State, and to them the employer schedule was sent. The personal canvass centered in localities where some specialized type of farming predominated, and was designed to reach mostly farms of that type; but on the routes traveled it was intended to pass by no farm hiring one or more workers. Near Boston, however, only market gardeners were visited. Both the employer and laborer schedules were used in the personal canvass.

The general localities visited (fig. 1) and the predominant type of agriculture of each were as follows: The Connecticut River Valley in Hampshire and Franklin Counties, tobacco and onions; the town of Colerain, apple growing; the town of Barre, dairying and general farming; lower Plymouth County centering around Wareham, cranberry growing; the town of Falmouth, strawberry growing; Marthas Vineyard Island, farming for summer-resort markets; southeastern Middlesex County, centering around Arlington, market gardening.

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The canvass in the Connecticut Valley was made during tobacco priming and cutting, when labor demand and supply was at its height; laborer schedules were taken in only part of that district, as that part of the work was not begun until the larger part of the employers there had been interviewed. The work near Barre and on Marthas Vineyard Island was done somewhat after the greatest need of labor for the summer had passed, but most of the men were still at work. In the Falmouth strawberry district few were employed in strawberry work; almost all the laborers interviewed there were engaged in general farm work. In lower Plymouth County many of the laborers interviewed were engaged in general upkeep of cranberry bogs and in general farming; the cranberry-picking season had not come. Around Colerain general farming was in progress; apple picking and its demand for pickers was soon to begin. In lower Middlesex County the season's market gardening was still at its height.

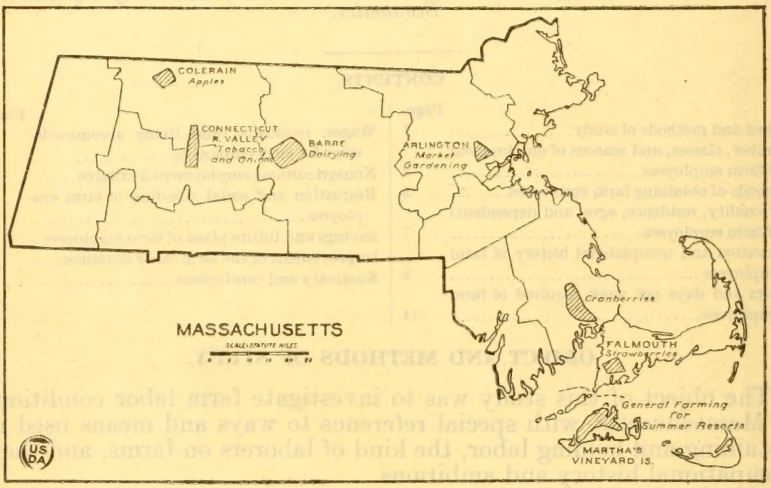

FIG. 1.—Localities visited and principal type of agriculture in each. (Data were gathered by mail from all parts of the State.)

To the employer schedule, 622 useful replies were obtained. Only farm laborers working for wages were interviewed; 395 were reached. On farms visited where only a few were employed, nearly every employee was reached; where many were working not all of them were interviewed, but enough to be representative of the workers.

NUMBER, CLASSES, AND SEASONS OF EMPLOYMENT OF FARM EMPLOYEES.

The most usual numbers of employees on the Massachusetts farms studied were one or two (Table 1); the average was brought up to four by large places such as market gardens and tobacco and onion farms. Dairy and livestock and general farms had the least, except for strawberry farms, where practically all the ordinary work is handled by the farm family. In rush times, usually harvest, almost equal numbers of farmers employed one to four hired workers per farm, and as a whole the number of paid workers more than trebled. Cranberry picking demands large numbers of hand workers, and the

tobacco is gathered largely by crews of frequently six or more working as a unit. Because their work is more steady, dairy and livestock farms make the least seasonal variation in number of employees.

TABLE 1.—*Number of farms hiring various numbers of employees.*

Season and number of employees.	Type of farm.						All farms.
	Cranberry bog.	Strawberry.	Dairy and live stock.	General.	Market garden.	Tobacco and onions.	
At other than harvest time:							
0	2	32	11	19	3	5	72
1	11	.....	42	95	16	19	183
2	8	1	15	48	17	28	112
3	9	.....	11	32	11	12	75
4	6	.....	6	13	11	9	45
5	2	.....	1	7	4	9	23
6 to 10	5	.....	7	10	15	7	44
11 to 15	1	.....	.....	2	7	3	13
16 to 20	.....	.....	1	2	1	4	8
21 to 50	2	.....	.....	2	5	3	12
51 to 200	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	1	1
Number of farms hiring	44	1	83	211	87	90	516
Number of employees hired	205	2	208	568	548	647	2,178
Average number of employees per farm hiring	4.66	2	2.51	2.69	6.30	7.19	4.22
At harvest time:							
1	2	1	22	35	5	.....	65
2	2	2	20	37	7	.....	68
3	1	1	21	30	5	5	63
4	.....	4	13	25	7	10	59
5	2	8	7	14	7	9	47
6	2	4	4	20	8	7	45
7	1	4	6	11	3	7	32
8	2	4	2	21	7	13	49
9	1	2	.....	6	2	4	15
10	3	2	.....	18	5	8	36
11 to 15	9	1	7	11	11	16	55
16 to 20	7	.....	1	5	6	6	25
21 to 50	8	.....	1	7	14	11	41
51 to 200	4	.....	.....	1	4	5	14
Over 200	1	.....	.....	.....	.....	1	2
Number of farms hiring	45	33	104	241	91	102	616
Number of employees hired	1,227	200	442	1,493	1,316	2,241	6,919
Average number of employees per farm hiring	27.27	6.06	4.25	6.20	14.46	21.97	11.23

Practically all these farm employees were hired as hands or laborers (Table 2); foremen at no time made up over 6 per cent; others, such as milk-route deliverymen, teamsters or chauffeurs or greenhouse firemen, were occasionally found.

TABLE 2.—*Classes of employees by types of farms.*

Season and class of employees.	Type of farm.						All farms.
	Cranberry bog.	Strawberry.	Dairy and live stock.	General.	Market garden.	Tobacco and onions.	
At other than harvest time:							
Foremen	21	.....	17	42	24	26	130
Laborers	184	2	180	523	513	612	2,014
Others	.....	.....	11	3	11	9	34
Total	205	2	208	568	548	647	2,178
At harvest time:							
Foremen	35	.....	20	48	25	33	161
Laborers	1,178	200	410	1,431	1,280	2,199	6,698
Others	14	.....	12	4	11	9	50
Total	1,227	200	442	1,483	1,316	2,241	6,909

Most of the farm workers hired by Massachusetts farmers are men, especially when hired by the season (Table 3).[1] Considerable numbers of women and minors are hired for harvest work, except on dairy and livestock and general farms. Berry picking and sorting and some tobacco work are within their strength and ability, as is also considerable work on market-garden crops.

TABLE 3.—*Casual and noncasual employees on various types of farms by seasons.*

Season and kind of employees.	Type of farm.						All farms.
	Cranberry bog.	Strawberry.	Dairy and live stock.	General.	Market garden.	Tobacco and onions.	
At other than harvest time:							
Casual employees—							
Men	76	2	3	38	30	23	172
Women	8	.....	.....	.....	5	.....	13
Minors	.....	.....	3	5	2	1	11
Total casual employees	84	2	6	43	37	24	196
Noncasual employees—							
Men	123	.....	192	466	441	286	1,508
Women	.....	.....	2	16	25	.....	43
Minors	.....	.....	5	34	40	2	81
Total noncasual employees	123	0	199	516	506	288	1,632
Total employees at other than harvest time	207	2	205	559	543	312	1,828
At harvest time:							
Casual employees—							
Men	812	50	196	739	335	868	3,000
Women	229	125	3	46	150	288	841
Minors	64	25	10	137	318	88	642
Total casual employees	1,105	200	209	922	803	1,244	4,483
Noncasual employees—							
Men	123	.....	228	512	445	450	1,758
Women	.....	.....	2	24	32	.....	58
Minors	.....	.....	7	38	38	2	85
Total noncasual employees	123	0	237	574	515	452	1,901
Total employees at harvest time	1,228	200	446	1,496	1,318	1,696	6,382

Outside of harvest time, nine-tenths of the farm labor used was employed for much or all of the growing season; in harvest time, casual[2] employees made up seven-tenths of hired workers.

The season of employment of casual labor is largely from July to October; somewhat over half of the farmers reporting hired this class of labor. The majority of employing farmers hired season labor; seven-tenths of those reporting stated they hired during six or more months; nearly half those reporting hired all year. The length of time and season during which workers are hired depends greatly upon the farming operations conducted. The majority of dairy and livestock farmers, general farmers, and market gardeners hire some

[1] The returns from which this table was made were often unsatisfactory in that many employers failed to distinguish between "men" and "minors," considering minor boys to be adults if in their late teens or doing an adult's work regardless of age, which often was not known to the employers. Also, two types of schedules were used, differing in data asked as to number and kind of employees; this affects the tabulation of employees of tobacco and onion farms, among whom the less comprehensive schedule was generally employed. Furthermore totals of this table do not agree with those of Tables 1 and 2 because some farmers reported totals only without details; reports thus incomplete could not be used here.

[2] Casual employees, those employees hired for a short time only; noncasual employees, those hired steadily for periods of a month or more.

hands all year. The strawberry growers of Falmouth district hire practically no help except pickers in late June and early July, all the rest of the work being done by the family.

On cranberry bogs the greater part of the help is hired in September and October for picking berries; care of the bogs is given attention mostly before blossoming time and after picking time in late fall or early winter. Dairy and livestock and general farmers comprised nearly half those hiring all the year. The reason for all-year employment on this class of farms is partly due to the necessity of caring for livestock, and partly to the fact that work is provided by successive farm operations on such farms. Market gardeners frequently have greenhouses for winter operations. Operators of these intensively-worked places often plan to provide work for and to keep all men who will stay through the winter, but enough leave of their own accord to reduce the working forces to the desired numbers in the winter. Only a small part of tobacco and onion growers hire all the year. Of these, tobacco growers comprise the larger part, because quite often large growers run tobacco-sorting shops which furnish winter work for all their farm employees and for others.

METHODS OF OBTAINING FARM EMPLOYEES.

Most farmers reported getting all their labor locally or within a few miles, usually within daily reach of home for the employees. On the other hand, most of the cranberry growers and the Falmouth strawberry growers had to obtain labor from more distant points.

The majority of farmers obtain laborers of or through acquaintances or employees. Dairy and livestock farmers, general farmers, and market gardeners make all the use of employment offices reported. Advertising for farm help is mostly done by a few general farmers. Those living near large cities tend to use the city daily papers and those living in rural districts to use the agricultural press. Many Falmouth strawberry growers engage a season's pickers to return the next season or themselves hunt up others shortly before the season opens. Laborers come looking for work on the majority of the cranberry bogs of southeastern Massachusetts, where it is very common for a few Bravas[3] who intend to pick berries to come in from the cities just before the picking begins, look over the prospect, and report back to their friends. When picking begins the workers flock to the bogs, tending somewhat to go to those offering the chances of best earnings (the work is mostly on the piecework basis). To a limited extent the same thing is true of the strawberry-picking season around Falmouth.

Employment agencies supplying farm help were visited in several cities. They are grouped into privately and publicly conducted groups; the latter are much less common. Most of the private agencies visited stated they furnished all classes of farm help, and that ordinary farm hands made up the largest number. One agency made an effort to handle only the more experienced reliable help, including gardeners, farm managers and workers, and supervisors for estates. The Massachusetts Department of Agriculture conducts a

[3] Portuguese negroes are locally known by the name of "Bravas," derived from the name of that Cape Verde island whence most of those people migrated to this country.

limited placement service for agricultural workers at its offices in the State House, Boston. The Massachusetts Department of Labor and Industries and the United States Employment Service cooperate in employment services with offices at Boston, Worcester and Springfield, and handle mostly industrial help. The annual reports for 1919 and 1920 state that at those offices only 3 per cent of the total number of calls for persons were for agricultural work.

Fees charged vary with the class of office and its objects. The State public employment offices make no charge for services to employer or employee. One agency furnishing the better class of agricultural labor carried on its work in connection with others of its firm's activities, making no charge for its services. In Boston, employment-agency fees are regulated by the licensing board of the city, and the agencies may charge both the employer and employee a fee equal to 25 per cent of the first week's wages. As a matter of practice, the employee alone is usually charged a fee, as the agencies are glad enough to get the patronage of employers to charge them no fee and those which do charge fees to any employers usually exempt the larger ones.

Outside of Boston the agencies visited set their own rates, sometimes apparently charging what they think the individuals concerned will stand for. Some charge employers nothing, others charge both parties fees based upon the wages paid, the total fees for a single transaction amounting to about the same, whether collected of one or both parties. Jumping of fees by laborers is very common. They often make only a deposit and fail to pay the promised remainder when earned, if there has been no agreement that the employer shall deduct the balance due from his wages and make the payment for the man.

Most employment agencies require no references of the person seeking farm employment. Most of those which have such a requirement do not themselves investigate the references, but place them at the disposal of the prospective employer to verify if he wishes. Some better-class agencies require and investigate references before taking further steps to place a worker in a position, and a worker whose references do not turn out reasonably well is not placed. This practice is exceptional, but seems to be followed by worthwhile results to employer and employee.

Employment offices usually keep no record of a man's occupational history. The office people depend upon their ability to size a man up by his personal appearance and story the first time he applies for work; often he patronizes the office for successive jobs, and employers are apt to come back for employees, and the agency gradually acquires from each class a working knowledge of the laborers' capabilities. The better-class offices ask a record of the man's occupational history upon his first appearance, and try to keep up a record of his successive applications for work and his conduct on each job to which he is sent.

Massachusetts farmers, like most others, reported difficulty in getting the help wanted during and for a time following the World War. The trouble seemed to lie largely in getting the usual class of experienced workers at wages the farmers were willing to pay; labor of some sort was apparently usually obtainable at increased wage

rates. The slump in industrial employment in 1921 released many laborers for other work and that summer farmers usually were easily able to hire help. Many men finding no work in the cities and no openings through employment agencies took to the country roads looking for work. In some districts farmers turned away men. This abundance of labor forced down day wages even at harvest time. In spite of this, shortage of capable, steady, dependable men was frequently complained of among general farmers, and especially among dairy farmers.

NATIONALITY, RESIDENCE, AGES, AND DEPENDENTS OF FARM EMPLOYEES.

Discussion of the nationality of farm laborers in Massachusetts is complicated by the fact that many of American birth but of foreign-born parentage call themselves and are considered to be of the nationality of their parents. Consequently many farmers, who reported hiring foreigners may have been hiring some American-born. American employees alone were reported hired by a quarter of the farmers reporting and foreigners alone by two-fifths.

The farm hands vary widely both in nationality and in distribution of certain of the races. Immigrants tend to settle near others of their race, and thus in the Connecticut River Valley in Massachusetts there are many Poles, in southeastern Massachusetts many Bravas and Portuguese, in central Worcester County many Lithuanians, and in the market-gardening districts around Boston many Irish and Italians. The Colerain district was the most thoroughly American of the localities visited in character of farm operators and employees.

Cranberry-bog laborers and the Falmouth strawberry pickers are mostly Bravas. Finns used to be depended upon for bog work, but the Bravas have largely displaced them for unskilled labor. In the Connecticut River Valley Poles make up the larger part of farm labor and are usually preferred to Americans. They are strong, steady workers and are thrifty and ambitious to settle and own land. They have taken up and developed many of the less valuable tracts in the valley and now are also acquiring much of the best onion and tobacco land; many of them are counted among the valley's best farmers.

The Bravas have come into southeastern Massachusetts and nearby Rhode Island largely in the past 20 years; few of the second (or first American-born) generation have yet reached maturity. They make a distinct, slowly assimilating element in the population by reason of race, nationality, and education. At the time of immigration at least half seem to be illiterate, not many having had more than elementary school education; in one town a few attend a night school. The Bravas brought to this country a somewhat undeveloped set of moral standards, but are improving in that respect. They are usually hard-working and thrifty. Most of them used to come to this country to earn and save money upon which to return home and live in comfort, but an increasing proportion is settling here, buying cheap lots, erecting cottages which frequently would have been considered very good for Americans of a generation ago, and living more according to American standards. One town clerk

estimated 80 per cent of the Brava families had title to their homes in comparison with 50 per cent of native families. On the other hand, he estimated only one per cent of the total Brava population was on the town's voting lists, showing, thus far, a very low rate of naturalization.

RESIDENCE, AGE, DEPENDENTS.

The farm workers interviewed were mostly laborers; a few were out of employment; a few were foremen or supervisors. Farm operators working out as farm laborers occasionally constitute a minor but characteristic element of the farm-labor supply. Especially in the Connecticut Valley there are many such who help their families work onion acreages and work out much or all the regular working day. (Table 4.)

TABLE 4.—*Jobs held by American and foreign born farm workers when interviewed.*

Jobs held.	American born.		Foreign born.		All workers.	
	Number.	*Per cent.*	*Number.*	*Per cent.*	*Number.*	*Per cent.*
Out of work			6	3.3	6	1.5
Farm foremen	21	9.9	7	3.8	28	7.1
Farm laborers	164	77.4	144	78.7	308	78.0
Farm operator working out as laborer	11	5.2	21	11.5	32	8.1
Livestock worker	11	5.2	4	2.2	15	3.8
Others	5	2.3	1	0.5	6	1.5
Total	212	100.0	183	100.0	395	100.0

Of the 395 laborers interviewed, three-quarters reported they lived in the town where employed; half the remainder lived in adjoining places or within daily traveling distance of their work. Two hundred and twelve of them were American-born, 183 foreign-born. About three-quarters of the former were of native parentage; nearly as many were born in Massachusetts.

The foreign-born had been in this country an average of 16 years. That the recent war had checked immigration was shown by the fact that 15 of those interviewed had come into the country within two years, but in the six years previous only two had arrived; in the nine previous years at least seven had come each year.

The hired farm workers interviewed ranged from 13 to 72 years of age, the American born averaging 33.3 years; the foreign-born, 37.5 years; all workers, 35.2 years. Practically two-fifths of the American-born workers and only one-tenth of the foreign-born workers were under 25 years of age. This striking difference seems partly due to the fact that many young people of school age were working at the time of year the study was made, and to the tendency of American families working on the home farms to allow their young people wages while others tend not to do so. Less than one-fifth of the American-born, in contrast to half the foreign-born, were from 35 to 49 years of age. This may indicate that the latter stay on the soil better than the native-born, that they reach farm ownership less quickly, and that they were forced out of industrial employment by slack work more quickly than the probably more skilled native-born.

The American-born workers, partly because of the youthfulness of so many, were more largely unmarried than the foreign-born. (Table 5.) Also, they are less willing than the foreign-born to submit to a lower standard of living as a condition of marriage.

Among the unmarried were a few who reported dependents; usually they were helping out their parents' families. A few married reported no dependents. The explanation frequently lay in the fact that they were immigrants whose families were still in Europe, their support from the laborers cut off as a result of the war. The married foreign-born reported an average of nearly four dependents while the American-born had scarcely three.

TABLE 5.—*Marital status and dependents of farm workers.*

	Single.	Married.	Widowed.	Separated from family.	Divorced.	Total.
Marital status:						
American born	127	78	5	2	.....	212
Foreign born	70	101	10	.....	2	183
All	197	179	15	2	2	395
Number reporting dependents:						
American born	12	76	3	.....	.....	91
Foreign born	16	95	5	.....	1	117
All	28	171	8	.....	1	208
Number of dependents of those reporting:						
American born	33	219	9	.....	.....	261
Foreign born	26	359	12	.....	2	399
All	59	578	21	.....	2	660
Average number of dependents per case reporting:						
American born	2.75	2.9	3.0	.....	.....	2.9
Foreign born	1.6	3.8	2.4	.....	2	3.4
All	2.1	3.4	2.6	.....	2	3.2

EDUCATION AND OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY OF FARM EMPLOYEES.

Record of the education received by the laborer was obtained in every case (Table 6). Fifty-five had had no schooling whatever, and 35 others had been self-taught to some extent; all except 2 of these were foreign born. The comparative educational experience of American-born and foreign-born farm workers is illustrated by Figure 2. That the immigrant had had much less school work is plainly shown by the fact that a much smaller proportion had had work comparable to even lower grade school work, and while three-quarters of the American born had had upper grammar school work (and many of them went further), only one-seventh of the foreign born had had the same advantage. Some of the latter stated that what little education they did receive was obtained during a few winter weeks in the homeland at considerable effort, cost, and at a distance from home. To regroup, practically 1 hired farm worker in 7 was illiterate; nearly 2 in 5 had had elementary schooling only, and 1 in 6 had had work beyond grammar school.

TABLE 6.—*Education received by farm workers.*

Amount of education.	American born.	Foreign born.	All.
None	1	54	55
Self-taught	1	34	35
Grammar school:			
4 grades or less	42	24	66
5 to 9 grades	100	20	120
High school	51	3	54
Business college	10	3	13
Night school [1]		9	9
College	6		6
Foreign [1]	1	36	37
Number reporting	212	183	395

[1] Usually elementary.

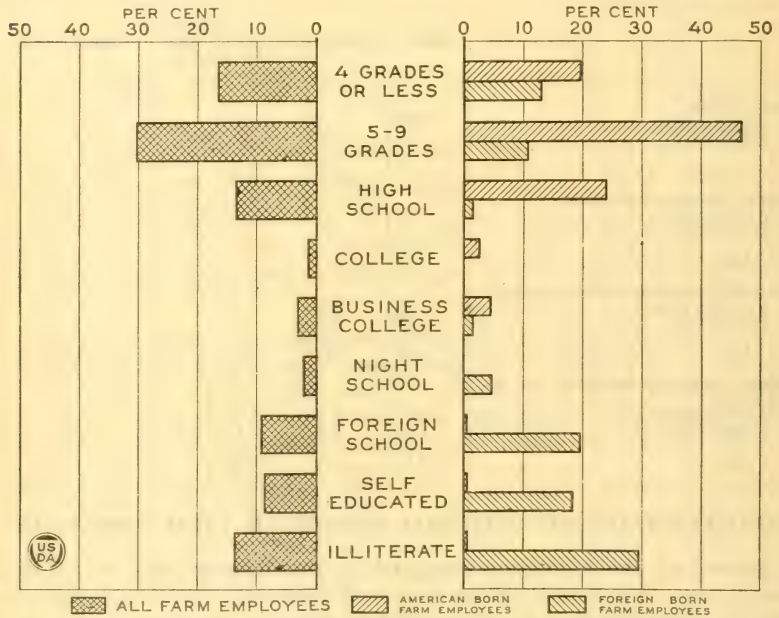

FIG. 2.—Amount of education received by 395 farm employees. Percentage receiving each type.

OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY.

The farm workers interviewed were questioned concerning their entire occupational experience and also as to their occupational experience for the period since 1917. (Tables 7 and 8.) The number of those who had at any time engaged in each group of occupations [4] is given for native and foreign born as well as for all workers (Table

[4] The replies were classified for tabulation purposes as follows:
(*a*) Common labor; nonagricultural unskilled labor (largely nonindustrial).
(*b*) Agricultural labor, unskilled; such as farm hand, teamster, cranberry-bog worker, dairyman, etc.
(*c*) Agricultural labor, skilled; farm operator (owner or tenant), manager, foreman, etc.
(*d*) Industrial labor, unskilled; common labor in industrial plants such as mills, garages, lumber camps, tobacco shops.
(*e*) Industrial labor, skilled; in trades, largely industrial and mechanical.
(*f*) Business, clerical; employee, agent, clerk.
(*g*) Business, administrative; foreman, storekeeper, or other responsible position.
(*h*) Public service; in Army, Navy or Government service, United States or foreign.
(*j*) Marine or seafaring.
(*k*) Domestic; housewife, cook, etc.

7 and fig. 3); the number of those who had engaged in certain agricultural and industrial employments is given for all workers (Table 8 and figs. 4 and 5).

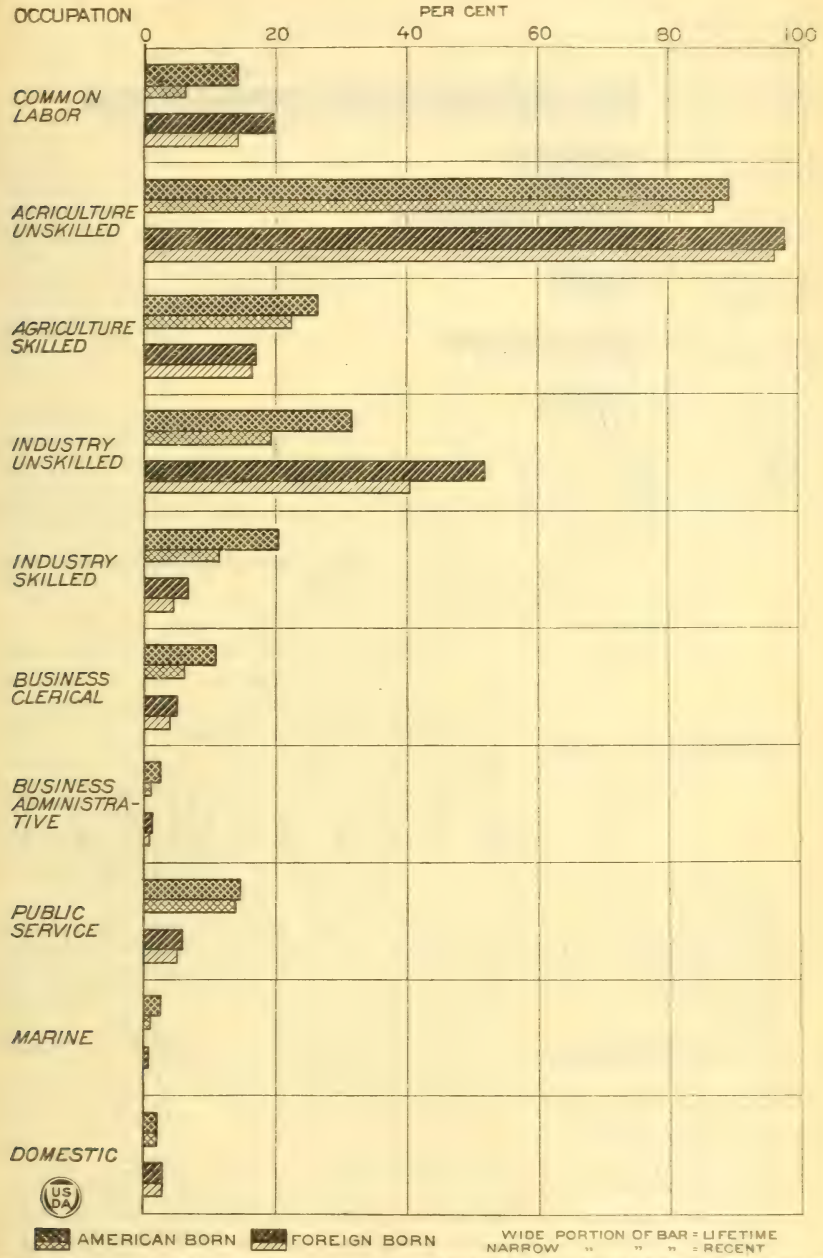

FIG. 3.—Comparative lifetime and recent occupational history of American and foreign-born farm employees. Percentages of each who ever engaged in certain occupations.

Two-thirds of the workers had never engaged in skilled or responsible work of any type. That the foreign born had tended to engage less in skilled work than the native born is indicated by the fact that

somewhat larger percentages of the latter reported having engaged in common labor, unskilled agricultural, industrial and business work both in their lifetime and recently.

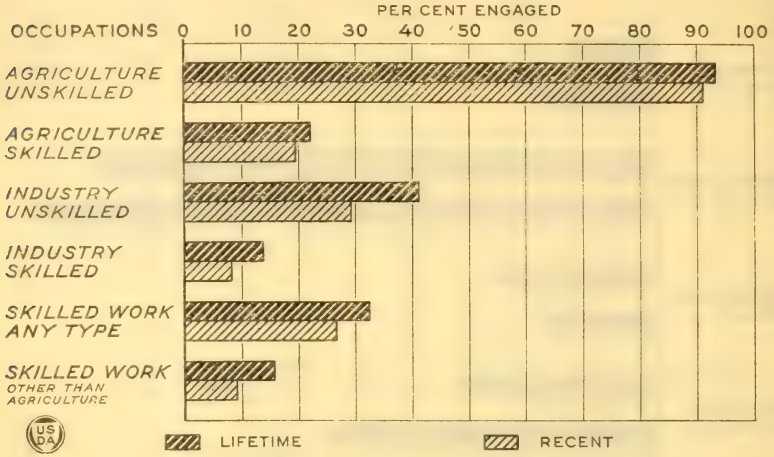

FIG. 4.—Percentage of 395 farm employees ever engaged in certain occupations or groups of occupations.

TABLE 7.—*Comparative life-time and recent occupational history of American-born and foreign-born farm workers.*

[Numbers and percentages ever engaged in certain occupations.]

Part of occupational history and numbers and percentages in each occupation.	Occupation.									
	Common labor.	Agricultural.		Industrial.		Business.		Public service.	Marine.	Domestic.
		Unskilled.	Skilled.	Unskilled.	Skilled.	Clerical.	Administrative.			
Lifetime:										
American born, 212 cases—										
Number	30	189	56	67	43	23	5	31	5	4
Per cent of all (212) cases	14.2	89.2	26.4	31.6	20.3	10.8	2.4	14.6	2.4	1.9
Foreign born, 183 cases—										
Number	36	179	31	95	12	9	2	10	1	5
Per cent of all (183) cases	19.7	97.8	16.9	51.9	6.6	4.9	1.1	5.5	0.5	2.7
All farm workers, 395 cases—										
Number	66	368	87	162	55	32	7	41	6	9
Per cent of all (395) cases	16.7	93.2	22.0	41.0	13.9	8.1	1.8	10.4	1.5	2.3
Recent history (Jan., 1918, to summer of 1921):										
American born, 212 cases—										
Number	13	184	47	41	24	13	2	29	2	4
Per cent of all (212) cases	6.1	86.8	22.2	19.3	11.3	6.1	0.9	13.7	0.9	1.9
Foreign born, 183 cases—										
Number	26	176	30	74	8	7	1	9	0	5
Per cent of all (183) cases	14.2	96.2	16.4	40.4	4.4	3.8	0.5	4.9	0	2.7
All farm workers, 395 cases—										
Number	39	360	77	115	32	20	3	38	2	9
Per cent of all (395) cases	9.9	91.1	19.5	29.1	8.1	5.1	0.8	9.6	0.5	2.3

TABLE 8.—*Numbers and percentages of 395 farm workers ever engaged in certain occupations or groups of occupations.*

[See also fig. 5, p. 23.]

Occupations.	At any time.		January, 1918, to summer, 1921.	
	Number.	Percentage.	Number.	Percentage.
Agriculture, unskilled	368	93.2	360	91.1
Agriculture, skilled	87	22.0	77	19.5
Industry, unskilled	162	41.0	115	29.1
Industry, skilled	55	13.9	32	8.1
Agriculture only, unskilled	98	24.8	150	38.0
Agriculture only, skilled	11	2.8	24	6.1
Agriculture only, both unskilled and skilled	22	5.6	26	6.6
Agriculture unskilled and industry unskilled only	98	24.8	87	22.0
Agriculture unskilled and industry skilled only	22	5.6	20	5.1
Unskilled work only, any type	267	67.6	281	71.1
Skilled work, any type	127	32.2	104	26.3
Skilled work, any type other than agricultural skilled	61	15.4	36	9.1
Skilled work only, any type	14	3.5	29	7.3

Eliminating from consideration the foremen and farm operators working out when interviewed (66 persons in all), the percentages given in Table 8 for those ever engaged in unskilled agriculture would be raised slightly, and for those ever engaged in skilled agriculture reduced largely. The figures relating to industrial work would be changed but little. Practically four-fifths of these workers had never engaged in skilled or responsible work.

The variety of occupations in which the farm workers engaged since 1917 was decidedly decreased from that of their lifetimes, but was still large; 283 workers seem to have done in their lifetime nothing which they did not do in the last few years.

Farm workers were asked the amount of involuntary unemployment they had had in the last two years and the consequent loss of wages, without regard to the jobs held preceding such periods of unemployment. (Table 9.) Because of the large amount of industrial idleness in 1921, probably more workers than would be usual reported unemployment. Workers' estimates of their wages lost were often plainly influenced by the pay they had received on previous jobs, which had paid better than did the same work after the industrial decline began, carrying wages down with it. A much larger proportion of the foreign born than American born reported unemployment (Table 9), and per case, the foreigner lost more time and money.

TABLE 9.—*Unemployment, loss of time and wages in two years, 1920 to 1922, in any occupation, reported by American and foreign born farm workers.*

	American born.	Foreign born.	All workers.
Total number of reports	212	178	390
Number reporting no unemployment	179	114	293
Number reporting unemployment	33	64	97
Per cent reporting unemployment	15.6	36.0	24.9
Loss in wages:			
Amount	$8,725	$15,925	$24,650
Number reporting amount	25	32	57
Average	$349	$497.66	$432.46
Loss in time:			
Amount (months)	141	245	386
Number reporting amount	31	43	74
Average (months)	4.55	5.70	5.22

Figures upon unemployment by districts (Table 10) include resident and nonresident farm workers. They well represent the situation for residents except in the Barre district in which a larger proportion of nonresidents were interviewed than elsewhere. These had been forced out of industrial work temporarily by unemployment. Unemployment among workers resident in the locality where interviewed was much the greatest around Falmouth and Wareham.

TABLE 10.—*Unemployment, loss of time and wages, in two years, 1920 to 1922, in any occupation, reported by farm workers, by districts.*

Loss in time and wages.	District.							
	Connecticut Valley.	Wareham.	Falmouth.	Barre.	Colerain.	Marthas Vineyard.	Arlington.	Total.
Number reporting concerning unemployment	94	62	40	62	52	31	49	390
Number who suffered unemployment	15	25	21	21	5	4	6	97
Loss in wages:								
Amount	$4,290	$9,125	$1,500	$5,450	$1,360	$900	$2,025	$24,650
Number reporting	12	20	2	13	4	1	5	57
Average	$357.50	$456.25	$750	$419.23	$340	$900	$405	$482.47
Loss in time:								
Amount (months)	53	114	83	85	13	12	26	386
Number reporting	15	22	9	17	4	1	6	74
Average (months)	3.53	5.18	9.22	5	3.25	12	4.33	5.22

HOURS AND DAYS PER WEEK REQUIRED OF FARM EMPLOYEES.

The hours of labor per day required of farm hands in summer varied somewhat according to the job. The 9-hour day was most commonly reported, and the 10-hour day nearly as frequently. In berry picking, the length of the working-day depends much on the weather, and varies from 5 or 6 hours upwards on good days. Farms with livestock to care for reported the longest days, 10 hours, and some even 11 hours. The most common length of work day in winter was 9 hours.

"Daylight saving" had been officially accepted by the State legislature, with clocks set one hour ahead of standard time during the summer. This was opposed by farmers, especially by those hiring labor, who claimed it compelled them to shift their work to unnatural hours and to work at a disadvantage in morning dampness and to stop in the afternoon just when an hour meant much more than the morning hour forced upon them. Some largely agricultural townships voted to retain standard time and continued to work on that basis. The six-day week is the rule among Massachusetts farmers. Occasionally one is found who grants his employees a Saturday half holiday. One market gardener reported this, saying he paid for six full days' work and considered his employees made up for the time given by increased interest in their work and willingness to work overtime occasionally when needed.

Little work on Sunday is expected of most farm employees. About half of the farmers expect some regular help from their employees, and most of this centers around the care of livestock; on some dairy

and livestock farms the amount is considerable. Farmers preparing loads of vegetables for early Monday market often do some of that work Sundays, requiring help of their employees a few hours at the most. Strawberry growers seldom pick on Saturday or July 3, but pick berries all day Sunday or July 4 and ship late in the afternoon for the next day's market.

Holiday work required is usually similar to Sunday work. In many cases, whether or not they work on holidays depends upon the employees themselves; often the holidays mean less to the men than other days which they can take off as desired. Some foreigners pay no attention to American holidays, but insist upon taking those of their native country, both political and religious.

WAGES, PERQUISITES, AND LIVING ACCOMMODATIONS FOR FARM EMPLOYEES.

Average farm wages in 1921 were decidedly lower than those of 1920. Farm employers manifested general satisfaction at the decline, but employees were inclined to believe wages fell faster than the cost of living. Wages without board in 1920 ran up to $5.50 and $6 per day, and in one district of general farms some employers stated that not only were they compelled to carry their men from and to their homes morning and night, but also at noon because the men refused to carry their dinners. On Marthas Vineyard Island, however, wages still held to the 1920 scale. Agriculture there is largely dependent upon and sharply competitive for labor with summer resorts, and on the island the effects of prosperity and depression are not so quickly felt as on the mainland. The amount of money spent by patrons of such summer resorts as those of this island is greatly affected by their earnings of previous months; hence the prosperity of the resorts and adjacent localities tends to lag behind that of the mainland of the State.

WAGES AT OTHER THAN HARVEST TIME.

The common farm-wage rate for men, without board, was $3 per day at times other than harvest; it was paid by practically half the farmers reporting. (Table 11). Many men considered worth less were paid less. This practice was common among the cranberry growers, where Bravas were paid 25 to 50 cents per day less than white men. As three-quarters of the cranberry work is done by Bravas, the average rates shown in Table 11 for cranberry work should probably be lower. Rates up to $4 per day for work at other than harvest time were not uncommon among dairymen and market gardeners.

WAGES AT HARVEST TIME.

In harvest season, wages as a whole averaged only slightly above those of the rest of the year, the most common day wage rate without board for men still being $3. Wages for cranberry work showed the highest average increase, due largely to the fact that wages at picking time are largely on the piecework basis at so much per measure of berries picked. Pickers working with the "scoop" often double their usual daily earnings at that time. Wages on tobacco and onion farms barely held their own on account of oversupply of labor in the Connecticut Valley. The tendency to offer and accept work at even lower rates than earlier in the season was quite noticeable.

Day help are boarded by farmers comparatively little, the practice of furnishing board being confined largely to dairy and livestock farmers and especially to general farmers. Wage rates with board averaged somewhat over a dollar less than without board, or above $2 per day.

Perquisites in addition to wages are given to few day men. When given, they consist largely of dinners, and car fares are sometimes paid.

TABLE 11.—*Day wages with and without board for men, women, and minors, on certain types of farms in Massachusetts. 1921.*

AT TIMES OTHER THAN HARVEST TIME.

Type of farm.	Cranberry bog.	Strawberry.	Dairy and livestock.	General.	Market garden.	Tobacco and onions.	All farms.
Men, without board:							
Number of reports	36	1	38	127	54	86	342
Average wage	$3.07	$3.00	$3.16	$3.19	$3.54	$3.21	$3.23
Most common wage	$3.00	.....	$3.00	$3.00	$3.00	$3.00	$3.00
Men, with board:							
Number of reports	.....	.....	14	32	8	8	62
Average wage	.....	.....	$1.97	$2.00	$2.03	$2.31	$2.04
Most common wage	.....	.....	.....	2.50	.....	2.00	$2.00 or $2.50
Women, without board:							
Number of reports	6	.....	1	9	23	3	42
Average wage	$2.29	.....	$3.00	$2.61	$2.22	$2.63	$2.36
Most common wage	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	$2.00
Women, with board.[1]							
Minors, without board:							
Number of reports	.....	.....	.....	6	7	3	16
Average wage	.....	.....	.....	$2.02	$1.92	$1.92	$1.96
Most common wage	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Minors, with board:							
Number of reports	.....	.....	.....	1	1	.....	2
Average wage	.....	.....	.....	$1.54	$2.00	.....	$1.77

AT HARVEST TIME.

Men, without board:							
Number of reports	6	9	35	131	25	102	308
Average wage	$4.37	$2.50	$3.41	$3.39	$3.64	$3.21	$3.34
Most common wage	.....	.....	$3.00	$3.00	$3.00 or $4.00	$3.00	$3.00
Men, with board:							
Number of reports	.....	.....	18	33	2	6	59
Average wage	.....	.....	$2.05	$2.20	$2.75	$2.13	$2.17
Most common wage	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	$2.00 or $2.50
Women, without board:							
Number of reports	3	8	2	9	14	14	50
Average wage	$4.33	$2.63	$3.25	$2.75	$2.38	$3.31	$2.90
Most common wage	.....	.....	.....	.....	$2.50	$3.00	$3.00
Women, with board.[1]							
Minors, without board:							
Number of reports	.....	.....	1	2	7	2	12
Average wage	.....	.....	$1.60	$2.25	$2.01	$1.88	$2.00
Minors, with board:							
Number of reports	.....	.....	1	.....	.....	.....	1
Average wage	.....	.....	$2.50	.....	.....	.....	$2.50

[1] No reports upon this basis.

Women are seldom hired by Massachusetts farmers, except at harvest time, and then largely by market gardeners and growers of Sumatra tobacco. Practically none of them are boarded by their employers. Their common wage rate for work other than harvest was $2 per day and in harvest $3. Many women working on cran-

berry bogs or in the screening houses of the bogs made up to $6 per day. In tobacco-priming season of the Connecticut Valley women are employed mostly to string the Sumatra leaves for hanging in the drying sheds. They earned on a piecework basis up to $4.50 per day, averaging $2.75. In Falmouth strawberry harvest pickers were paid by the quart, and earned sometimes $3 per day.

Massachusetts farmers hire few minors incapable of doing an adult's work. Wage reports for any not thus capable were scattering.

MONTHLY WAGES.

Noncasual men employees are usually paid by the month by Massachusetts farmers. Wages without board in 1921 averaged $82.51; $78 was the most common rate, but most of the market gardeners paid more than this, averaging $94.81, doubtless because of the semiskilled nature of much of the work, the higher cost of living in semiurban conditions, and the sharper competition of other employers for labor.

Monthly wages with board ranged mostly from $25 to $65 per month; the most common rates were $40 to $50; half the farmers who reported paid these rates. Much the larger part of farmers boarding their steady men were dairy and livestock and general farmers, the majority of whom furnished board.

Board given the farm laborer usually included room and laundry work done in the farm home. Farmers commonly estimated the value of this at about $10 per week, or $40 per month, in 1921.

Foremen's wages per month varied greatly, as did their perquisites and their duties. (Table 12.) The rates reported varied from $43 to $225 cash per month; the common rates were about $100 cash per month. A third of the farmers reporting gave rates of $90 or less per month, but there were given also in nearly every such case valuable perquisites such as house rent, fuel, farm products, or occasionally a bonus or commission upon farm operations.

Farm foremen are seldom boarded by their employers; most of such cases were reported by general farmers and dairy and livestock men. Monthly wages to these men averaged $83.87. (Table 12.)

TABLE 12.—*Monthly wages with and without board for foremen and noncasual men on certain types of farms in Massachusetts in 1921.*

Type of farm.	Cranberry bog.	Dairy and livestock.	General.	Market garden.	Tobacco and onions.	All farms.
Foremen, without board:						
Number of reports	11	14	29	19	19	92
Average wage	$106.94	$96.43	$100.28	$122.93	$111.13	$107.41
Foremen, with board:						
Number of reports	.....	5	10	2	2	19
Average wage	.....	$78.20	$85.50	$87.50	$86.25	$83.87
Season men, without board:						
Number of reports	17	38	69	38	54	216
Average wage	$80.06	$77.38	$79.37	$94.81	$82.27	$82.51
Most common wage	$78.00	$78.00	$78.00	.....	$78.00	$78.00
Season men, with board:						
Number of reports	1	66	124	24	17	232
Average wage	$43.33	$42.69	$44.35	$41.24	$40.24	$43.25
Most common wage	.....	$40.00	$40 or $50	.....	.....	$40 or $50

BONUS SYSTEMS.

Bonus systems or inducements of financial value for increased efficiency of farm labor were seldom reported. In some cases harvesting work was paid for by a system of piecework as in hanging tobacco or picking berries; wages in these cases depended much upon the worker himself. Occasionally a penalizing scheme was used to keep help on the job, such as withholding until next pay day a part of the wages due. In strawberry picking, sometimes one-half cent per quart was docked if the picker did not stay through the season. A dairyman interviewed was introducing a bonus system dependent upon his receipts from milk sales, which in turn were determined by the cleanliness of his milk as produced by the men. Occasionally, especially in the cranberry district, foremen were given a bonus or commission based on production or profits of a season's operations. As a whole, bonus systems based upon farm profits are difficult of computation and prolific of dissatisfaction.

PERQUISITES.

One hundred and ninety of the 622 farmers reported that they gave perquisites of value in addition to wages to employees whom they did not board. These varied greatly in kind and value, somewhat according to the employer's circumstances and also to customs and values locally. Many farms considered in this study produce specialties only, and this fact decidedly limited the nature of the perquisites which could be furnished. Consequently cranberry, strawberry, and tobacco and onion producers give little in the way of milk, vegetables, or fruit.

Many farmers reported that the values of perquisites given to their men in addition to wages range up to $25 per month, and occasionally in the case of such as foremen whose families board other farm help, up to $50 and even $75 per month.

General farmers constituted one-third of those placing a value upon perquisites given, and they reported the greatest average monthly values, $22.96. Together with dairy farmers, they made up half the reports, and the average value of perquisites for those farms was reported as $21.94 monthly.

Shelter or housing is one of the most common perquisites. Cranberry growers commonly provide bog shacks for their workers, especially pickers. Usually no value is placed upon such accommodations, as they are little more than shelters against mild weather and their value is low. Some strawberry growers had shacks; others, having none, gave their pickers the use of tents or rooms in their houses; some pickers bring tents. Aside from these, practically a fifth of all farmers and a quarter of dairy farmers reported giving house rent to employees. Rental values as a whole ranged from $8 to $25 per month, with extremes of $5 and $50; the average value was $13.11, the most common value was $10, with two-thirds as many at $15. Market gardeners gave the highest rental values because of surrounding urban conditions, averaging $15.50.

Among the tobacco and onion growers of the Connecticut Valley the housing of farm labor was most generally recognized as a desirable means of holding good help. Here, however, the practice is different from most of the rest of the State in that the tenant is charged a regular rental more often than not. Farmers frequently built

houses and the men occupying them agreed to work for the landlords when needed, being free to work elsewhere much of the year; consequently, rental was charged regularly instead of being furnished as a part of the wage. The average value of monthly rentals charged was $10, of rentals furnished in connection with wages, $10.62, for this district.

Fuel was frequently given with rental as a perquisite, and usually consisted of wood from the farm. Cranberry growers commonly expected their workers to gather dead wood for cooking near their shacks or sometimes to cut wood in designated places. The Falmouth strawberry pickers were generally furnished stove wood for cooking. Usually neither class of employers placed any value upon this fuel. Dairy and general farmers very often furnished their help whom they housed with wood for household purposes, often averaging a cord a month; farm values for this ranged from $8 to $10 per cord. For all farms reporting it, the average value of fuel furnished was $5.57 per month.

Employers occasionally reported giving their help the use of horses, tools to cultivate garden plots, and vehicles with which to occasionally go from and to the farms. Usually no value was placed upon such help, but where valued it averaged $4.06 per month.

Of farm products given as perquisites, milk was most frequently named. Fifty-three farmers reported the value of this, and prices ranged from 7 to 15 cents per quart according to the type of dairying conducted. The most common quantities and values furnished were 2 quarts per day and $6 per month. In a few cases where more milk was supplied the men were boarding other farm help in their homes.

Vegetables were supplied farm employees comparatively seldom, partly because many employers raised none, and partly because many farm employees had garden space allowed them. Few farmers reported upon this topic. Some laborers were freely allowed to take cull stuff of small market value; in other cases the worth monthly ran to $15. The average was $6.09.

Occasionally other extras were given such as pasturage or hay for an animal, electric light or telephone for the tenant house, and eggs, fruit, or ice.

LIVING ACCOMMODATIONS FOR FARM HANDS.

Cranberry growers furnish practically no accommodations for their workers, except that most of them have shacks where they may prepare meals and live and sleep in mild weather. The workers provide their own food and dishes. The pickers, forming the larger part of the help, stay, at the most, but a few weeks in early fall.

Similar provisions are usual among the Falmouth strawberry growers. Here the pickers often bring their own tents, but usually the employers, according to their circumstances, provide tents, shacks, or rooms in their own houses.

Most other types of Massachusetts farmers make more provision for their employees. Those boarded are generally single men. The majority of market gardeners and tobacco and onion growers board no help, while the majority of dairy and livestock men and general farmers do, or in some cases provide farm boarding houses or boarding places with other employees. Boarding of farm laborers usually in-

cludes room and laundry. Men boarding with the employer's family generally have the use of the family's periodicals. As many foreign-born can not read English, they are cut off from that source of Americanization and recreation.

A few general and dairy farmers are practically the only ones hiring and boarding married couples in their homes. Doubtless more would do it if more capable ones could be secured—the man to do farm labor, the wife to do housework. Usually there is some shortcoming or characteristic about one of the couple making it difficult to keep them both.

Three-fifths of the farmers reporting made no provision for housing married employees. Some owners of more or less isolated cranberry bogs have cottages for foremen near the bogs. Many other farmers recognize the value of good help and that a man with home and family is more dependable than one free to move quickly, so they consider it worth while to build. Accordingly some have houses for year-round use varying from the old unimproved, more or less dilapidated to well-equipped and comfortable buildings. Thus it happens that many of the farm-hand dwellings in the onion and tobacco region of the Connecticut Valley seem to have been built within a few years. In general farming and dairying regions existing older houses are the rule, because often farm owners used them, and have later built anew for themselves and turned over their former dwellings to employees.

Most farmers providing houses for farm labor allow the tenants garden space desired, and sometimes chances to keep small livestock, such as poultry or hogs, or even to keep a cow, horse or automobile, or the use of the employer's horses and equipment with which to do some work. Good farm hands are often granted favors which cost the employer little, but which mean considerable to the employees and go far toward keeping them satisfied.

NONAGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT AVAILABLE.

The seasonal nature of agricultural work forces many who engage in it at all to make part of their living otherwise. The workers interviewed were asked if they had any regular variation of employment at different times of the year with special reference to their work when not engaged in agriculture. Most of Massachusetts offers such a variety of industrial employment there usually need be little travel to secure work. There is little uniformity in the kind of work secured at the different times of the year beyond that the swing is from agricultural labor to industrial work, which includes all sorts of mill, manufacturing, and, in the Connecticut Valley, tobacco-shop work. The Connecticut Valley offers the most uniform cycle of work noted in the study and probably in the State. The summer farming operations on tobacco and onions fit in well with the winter operations of tobacco-sorting shops, so that all-year employment is provided for nearly all wishing it. Of 107 reporting upon their usual variation in employment, 46 stated their nonagricultural work to be industrial; of these, 24 engaged in tobacco-shop work.

There seems to be little migratory agricultural labor in Massachusetts, except in the cranberry district. Most of the pickers are Bravas who have their homes in towns and cities not over 30 miles distant. Few of them were interviewed, as at the time of the canvass

near Wareham the cranberry-picking season had not opened. Large numbers of these negroes come every September to the cranberry bogs from nearby towns and from cities such as Fall River, New Bedford, and Providence. Most of these people return at the close of the harvest to their homes to engage in city work and industrial employment. Some are said to go as far south as Virginia to work north the next season with the truck-crop harvests, returning to the Massachusetts bogs by fall. Some, mostly women, pick strawberries near Falmouth in June and July, then blueberries in the woods of Plymouth County until September.

Around Falmouth the strawberry pickers are largely Brava women and young people coming from nearby points. Following strawberry picking, many of them pick blueberries and cranberries.

Farmers were asked if their help could easily find other work when not engaged upon farms, especially in winter. Somewhat over half of those replying considered other work usually available. As already noted, in the tobacco and onion district of the Connecticut Valley there is ample work all year. Tobacco-sorting shops offer steady winter work. Some tobacco growers run such shops and they, together with some market gardeners and dairy farmers, plan to furnish steady work for all their employees who do not leave. In sections of specialized seasonal agriculture, such as the cranberry and strawberry districts of southeastern Massachusetts, there is frequently little work available when the agricultural demand slackens.

Winter idleness, voluntary or involuntary because of lack of employment, seems most prevalent in southeastern Massachusetts, where the agriculture is largely confined to the berry crops, with their seasonal extremes in labor demand. Moreover, this idleness seems to be largely among the Bravas, some of whom prefer not to work in cold weather but to live upon their summer earnings; others seem really unable to get winter work, there is so little offered.

Most of the nonagricultural work available was reported to be mostly local, except in the cranberry and strawberry sections. It is largely industrial in character. Considerable winter work is offered in the woods of many parts of the State, but this source of employment is in some sections falling off.

RECREATION AND SOCIAL STANDING OF FARM EMPLOYEES.

The problem of recreation and conveyance between the farm and town, church, and school is frequently raised by farm workers, and many refuse farm employment because farms are not within easy traveling distance of towns. The average distance of the farms of this study from town centers was $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles; nearly a third lay over 2 miles out.

Distance to church was somewhat less than to town, because there are occasionally small churches serving as outlying social centers much nearer than trading centers. But as the rural church in New England is largely Protestant and in many districts the farm laborers are largely Catholic, the laborers are often compelled to go much farther to worship than the employers.

Most of these farms lay within a mile of at least an elementary school serving a rural district. Schools of upper grammar grades, and especially high schools, were usually more distantly located in

town centers. All public-school pupils living over a mile from their schools are carried between school and points not over a mile from their homes at public expense. This makes the problem of daily travel for school children much easier than otherwise.

Conveyance available for the farm hand to points away from the farm is often a problem. Public conveyances, usually street cars, were near less than a third of the farms. Frequently the employee's only chance to avoid walking was to get rides from passers-by or to depend upon the employer to occasionally take him into town on Saturday or Sunday or whenever he himself went.

Recreation is a vital need for the contentment of all workers. Half the farmers reporting in this study stated there is little available for the farm hand, especially if he is a transient stranger and has not social equality with other classes, except meeting with chance acquaintances among other farm hands. Consequently the men must hang around the farm for hours with nothing to occupy their minds except perhaps reading their employers' periodicals.

The social standing of farm laborers depends largely upon themselves in Massachusetts. Transient laborers make little place for themselves, except as workers in the temporary jobs for which they come. Nationality, especially of newly arrived immigrants, and color serve to set newcomers apart somewhat; but above all habits, industriousness, responsibility, and character of the workers have more than anything else to do to establish the position of an individual or a race among Massachusetts farmers. The foreign-born farm operators scattered over Massachusetts are likely to hire farm hands of their own nationality, often friends, and seldom do they consider their employees as other than respectable.

SAVINGS AND FUTURE PLANS OF FARM EMPLOYEES.

Farm employees were asked if they had bank accounts, personal property of value, or real estate. About a third of them were asked if they had life insurance. No inquiry was made as to amount or value. Two out of five had no savings whatever. One worker in 3 had a bank account, and almost 1 in 4 held title to real estate. One real-estate owner in 5 owned a farm. Nearly half the laborers interviewed had one form of savings and just over one-fifth had two forms; none had more.

Three-fifths of the farm workers intended to stay in agricultural work. One worker in 10 hoped to become a farm owner; a few already owned or rented farm land. The desire to acquire farm land was noted more among the American born, but a larger proportion of foreign born were actually operating land.

Somewhat over 10 per cent of the workers intended to leave farm work; over half of these were waiting a chance to resume former occupations. The tendency to leave agriculture seemed stronger among the native born and the younger than among the foreign born and older.

Those workers who had savings or property had distinctly the more definite aims in life. Three-quarters of them were planning to stay in agricultural work.

Almost a quarter of farm workers had no plans. The job offering the most money would attract most of them to it. They were more likely to be single than married

IMPROVEMENT OF FARM LABOR SITUATION.

Possibility of improvement in supply and character of farm labor lies to some extent in the attitude of the public toward the importance and requirements of agricultural work, but mostly in the selection of the workers and their treatment by employing farmers.

It is the general complaint of farmers that they can not pay wages as high as can industries. This attitude drives away from the farm work many capable men who would under proper conditions be worth to farmers the difference between the high and low wage rates.

Providing adequate, comfortable, reasonably convenient housing would enable farmers hiring most or all of the year to secure and hold many more steady, dependable men than is now possible. Many men who otherwise would accept it, now refuse farm work because they can find no accommodations for their families in rural districts.

More effort should be made to estimate the fitness of applicants for farm work. At present most of the employment agencies as well as the majority of farmers judge prospects by personal appearance and unsupported word only. A few better-class agencies require and verify references and statements of their applicants in the endeavor to supply and place men where best fitted. This service is mutually satisfactory. It remains for more demand to be created for it.

The farmer should remember that his hired hand is human. The average man will respond to intelligent interest in him and his welfare. There are many things the employer can do at little or no expense to make the laborer's work easier or more agreeable, his spare hours less monotonous, his quarters and conveniences more acceptable. The latter applies especially to the married man living in a farm tenement.

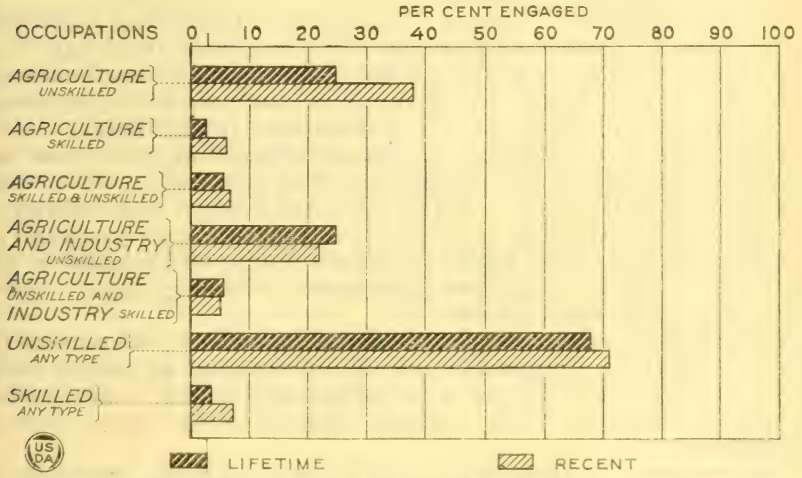

FIG. 5.—Percentages of 395 farm employees who had engaged exclusively in the types of work indicated.

[See pp. 11–13.]

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.

Of the farms studied, on less than half was help hired all year; on nine-tenths laborers were hired outside of harvest season, consisting largely of noncasual employees. During harvest, women and minors constituted a quarter of the hired labor; at other times nine-tenths of the hands were men.

Massachusetts farmers get most of their labor locally, largely by acquaintance and personal search. They patronize employment agencies but little. The average farm hand gets new work by personal search or acquaintance.

There are no State regulations of employment agencies; their business methods vary decidedly; greater uniformity of their methods would seem desirable. The fees charged applicants for farm employment or for farm help should be based upon the cost of rendering service rather than upon what the traffic will bear. Neither party to a placement transaction should be charged over half that amount.

The typical employment agency official makes no effort to determine an applicant's fitness for the work for which he applies. That there is need for it is demonstrated by its success where applied. Any agency could require or verify references or could use simple trade tests designed to bring out the applicant's knowledge of the work for which he applies.

In some sections of Massachusetts the farm labor supply in 1921 exceeded the demand. Most of the trouble in getting labor occurred among farmers that required care of livestock involving longer hours than field work.

American-born workers alone were employed on a quarter of the farms reporting, foreign born alone on two-fifths of the farms. Nationalities hired varied greatly, but within a given district usually one or two were predominant.

A third of the farm laborers interviewed had schooling equivalent to less than five grades of grammar school; another third had from five to nine grades. The foreign born had decidedly less education than the native born. One-seventh of the laborers interviewed were illiterate and practically all of those were foreign born.

Two-thirds of the laborers had never engaged in other than unskilled employment. The foreign born had engaged in skilled work less than the native born. A quarter of the laborers had suffered an average of 5 months of unemployment in the previous 2 years and an average loss of $429 in wages. Unemployment was greatest in the districts of highly specialized agriculture affording fewest opportunities for other employment.

There is little migration of agricultural labor from one part of the State to another. In general there is somewhat of an annual swing of workers from agricultural to industrial employment, most marked in the Connecticut Valley, where tobacco-sorting shops furnish winter work.

Employment for those who must leave farm work, especially in winter, is frequently scarce in districts of specialized agriculture having no near-by industries, but in most of the State much industrial work is usually available. A few farmers recognize the desirability of steady, year-round work for their men and make an effort to provide it.

The 6-day week is the rule among Massachusetts farmers. Sunday and holiday chores and emergency work were expected of farm hands on about half of the farms.

The most common wage rates on the farms studied were: for men, $3 per day in harvest, and at other times, $40 or $50 per month with board, or $78 per month without board; for women, $2 per day at other than harvest time. Harvest-time wages for women were largely on a piecework basis. Perquisites additional to wages varied greatly in kind and value. Bonus schemes used to encourage efficiency of labor were of limited application and success.

In some districts of the State farmers practically never give board and room to their help; in others they expect to thus accommodate much or all of their single help. This usually includes washing. Practically no farmers provide thus for married couples.

The social standing of the Massachusetts farm hands depends largely upon themselves and on the whole is respectable, especially if they are resident in the locality.

Two-fifths of farm workers interviewed had no savings; one-third stated they had bank accounts and almost one-fourth had title to real estate.

A quarter of the farm workers interviewed had no plans for the future; three-fifths intended to stay in farm work, two-thirds of them probably to continue as laborers. One in 10 hoped sometime to buy farm land. A few already owned land. About 1 worker in 10 intended leaving farm work, largely to resume former employment when possible. American-born and unmarried farm workers oftener expressed intention of leaving agriculture than did the foreign born and married.

Considerate treatment of the farm hands in all possible ways, many of which need cost the employer little, plays an important part in keeping them contented and steady and pays in return of satisfactory service.

Providing adequate decent housing for married farm laborers is to some extent becoming rightly recognized as an important means of securing and holding good hands. With the housing should go privileges for gardening and keeping small livestock.

Farm life frequently affords little or no chance for recreation and becomes very monotonous to farm hands. There is little or nothing they can do to create any diversion and often little encouragement to do so.

Intelligent efficiency should be encouraged by example and opportunity to learn on the farm, letting the employee know it will be appreciated. Farmers should make greater effort in their dull seasons to provide steady work for their better-class men, especially if no other local regular employment is available.

ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

February 4, 1924.

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26

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